



Student Financial Assistance

Solution Acquisition Project Management

Process Guide



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Solution Acquisition Project Management Process Guide

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of solution acquisition project management is to manage the activities of the acquisition to ensure a timely, efficient, and effective solution acquisition.

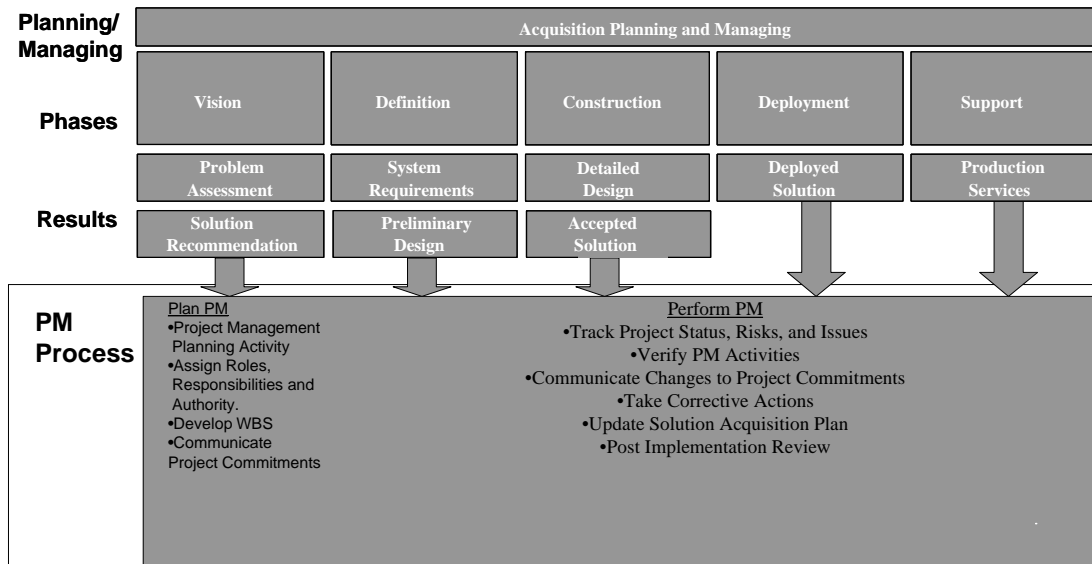
Acquisition project management involves planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling project activities. Activities include determining project tasks, estimating effort and cost, scheduling activities and tasks, scheduling training, leading assigned project personnel, and accepting products and services. Project management begins when an IT business need is identified and the project management responsibilities are assigned. Project management terminates when the acquisition is completed.

The Solution Acquisition Project Management Process Guide is intended for SFA project managers who lead solution acquisition projects. The SFA project managers should work in conjunction with the contractor's project manager. However, the two roles ultimately have different responsibilities. This process guide describes the role of the SFA project manager.

Solution Acquisition Project Management activities work in conjunction with the Solution Acquisition Planning activities described in the Solution Acquisition Planning Process Guide that can be found in the SLC.

1.1 Overview of Solution Acquisition Project Management and the SLC

Solution Acquisition Project Management is performed throughout the Solution Life Cycle (SLC). The diagram below highlights where the processes are performed in the SLC.





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2.0 Solution Acquisition Project Management Process Overview

2.1 Purpose

The Solution Acquisition Project Management process overview describes the SFA project management steps involved in managing an acquisition. This process works in conjunction with the established Solution Life Cycle (SLC).

2.2 Process Definition

Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to a broad range of activities in order to meet the requirements of acquisition projects. Project management knowledge and practices are best described in terms of their component processes. The remaining sections of the document describe each of the components in further detail.

The overall process and its component processes (WBS, Status Reporting, Risk Management and Issue Management), work in conjunction with the Modernization Partner program Project Management Office (PMO) status reporting guidelines which includes a project scorecard, WBS update, Major Risks, Government and Program Dependencies, and Key Issues and Decisions. Each Modernization Project reports status based on those guidelines. This Process Guide coincides with the PMO status reporting guideline.

2.3 Benefits

Project management provides:

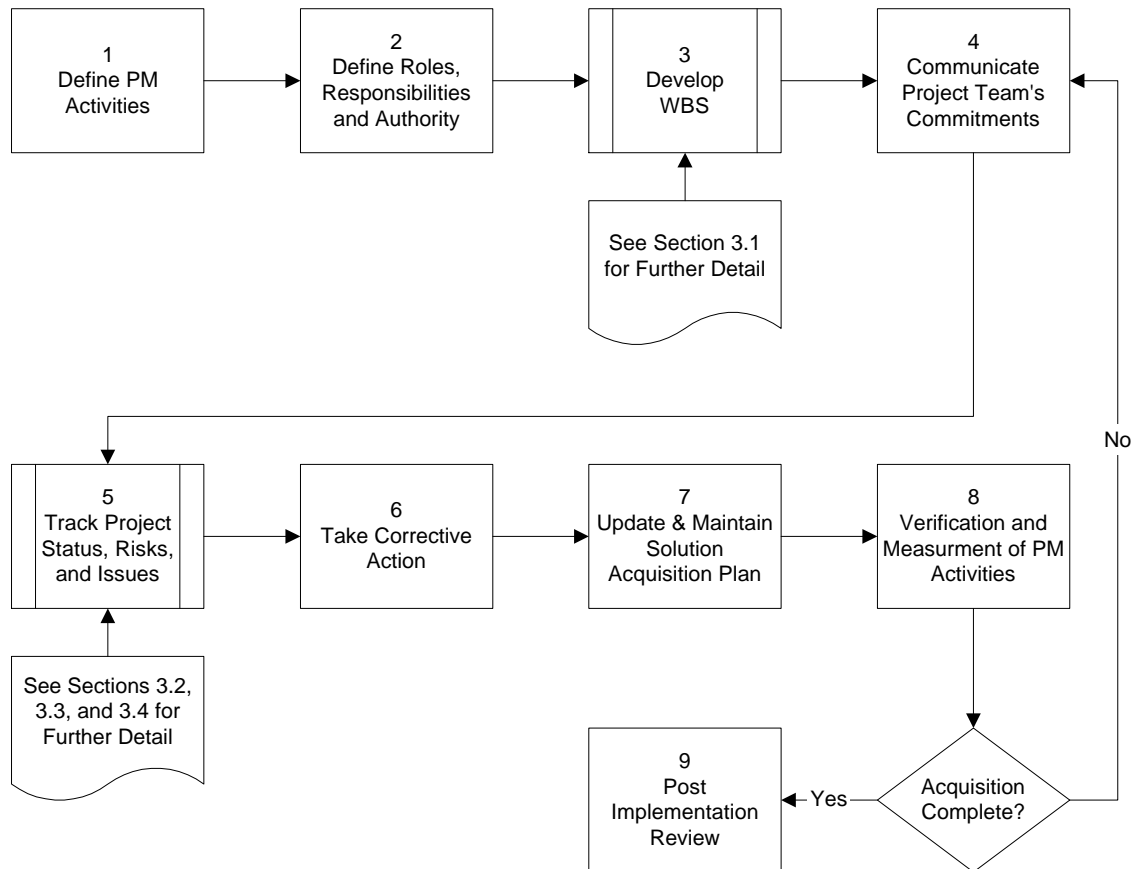
- Clearly defined roles – employees benefit from project management because their roles are clearly defined;
- Disciplined approach – consistency is developed for every project thus offering project managers a proven, disciplined approach;
- Less duplication of effort – managers and employees alike draw on lessons learned to refine their efforts and avoid repetition of mistakes;
- Streamlined process – by managing and tracking their activities, and following a prescribed framework for those activities project managers can realize significant levels of efficiency. Employees achieve new levels of effectiveness by following a predictable, well-communicated process.
- In line with Clinger-Cohen legislation – compliance to guidelines set by legislation is facilitated through improved processes and procedures.



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2.4 Process Flow

The following steps are described in the next section, Section 2.5. Detailed processes for steps 3 and 5 are described in Sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4.



2.5 Process Steps

1. Define Project Management Activities

During the Vision phase and early in the Definition phase of the Solution Life Cycle (SLC), the project management activities must be defined. The SFA project manager should define the project management activities once they have been assigned responsibility for a project. The project manager may begin to form a working group or project management office to perform the activities. The project management activities can begin as soon as acquisition planning has begun or officially when the business case is approved.

The project management activities that should be defined are when and where status meetings will occur, how often the project will report on progress, identifying a reporting standard, identifying a risk and issue tracking standard, and ensuring that success measures are being tracked regularly. Also, SFA project manager must identify when and how the acquiring organization's (e.g. the Schools Channel)



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management will review the progress of project management activities. These decisions should be documented in the Solution Acquisition Plan.

2. Identify Roles, Responsibilities, and Authority

The roles, responsibilities, and authority for the project functions are documented, maintained, and communicated. The SFA project manager must assign responsibility for each of the project management support functions. These responsibilities include: status reporting, status meeting agenda preparation and meeting minutes, and risk and issue tracking. Authority may or may not be assigned to the project manager based on the circumstances of the project. This should also be documented in the Solution Acquisition Plan.

3. Develop Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)

The SFA project manager and the operating partner project manager develop a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) in keeping with SLC guidelines to include project management activities, as well as detailed project design, construction, deployment and support activities.

See Section 3.1.

4. Communicate the Project's Commitments and Changes to those Commitments

The SFA project manager must communicate the project commitments to the project team. An example of a project commitment is an agreement with a vendor for delivery or a commitment to use a certain development tool. Communication of these commitments will ensure that the entire project is aware of the internal and external project commitments. Throughout the phases of the project, the SFA project manager must communicate changes to those commitments. Those changes can be communicated in a variety of ways including status meeting updates, meeting minutes and email. The project's commitments should be documented in the Solution Acquisition Plan.

5. Track Project Status, Risks and Issues

Once the project is initiated, tools have been selected and responsibilities have been assigned, the SFA project manager must track project status, risks and issues. The SFA project manager must refer to the Solution Acquisition Plan as a reference to monitor actual progress against planned progress. The SFA project manager must track the success measures identified in the Measurements section of the Solution Acquisition Plan. These measures should be tracked regularly through out the project's life cycle. Progress can be tracked through project status reports and reviewed during project status meetings. The project's schedule and budget can be monitored using the detailed WBS.

Risks and issues must also be tracked for the project. Risks and issues should be tracked separately in a matrix or log and reviewed during project status meetings. An example of a Risk Matrix and Issue Matrix can be found in Appendix B as well as procedures in Appendix C.

See Sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4.

6. Take Corrective Action

The acquiring organization must ensure that the contractor is employing a corrective actions process for issues that arise and require resolution. The IPT must take corrective action when necessary. It is essential that the IPT assigns and records actions when necessary. This process can be monitored during status meetings, within status reports and in a corrective action items log. The actions should be reviewed at subsequent status meetings until the action is completed or closed.



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7. Update Solution Acquisition Plan

The Solution Acquisition Plan must be kept current during the project as replanning occurs, issues are resolved, requirements are changed, and new risks are discovered. The project's Solution Acquisition Plan should be updated accordingly to document the changes. Actual data should be tracked and updated accordingly, for example, milestone completion dates. Any changes to the Solution Acquisition Plan should follow the project's configuration management process and the Solution Acquisition Planning process.

8. Verification and Measurement of Project Management Activities

SFA project management and the Executive Sponsor must review the progress of project management activities on a periodic basis. This step ensures that project management activities are taking place as planned in Step 1. The review procedure (e.g. date of review) should be documented in the Solution Acquisition Plan in the Project Management section.

9. Post Implementation Review

At the end of a project's life cycle (when the acquisition is complete), the SFA project manager should ensure that the project management documentation is completed and published on the SFA intranet site. All actual data, (e.g. final costs, milestone dates, etc.) must be entered into the Solution Acquisition Plan. The updated Solution Acquisition Plan, WBS, meeting minutes, risk log, and issue log must be completed and/or updated and then published in the SFA intranet site for future reference by other SFA project managers of an acquisition. A final status meeting may be held to finalize and document any conclusions to issues or corrective actions. The documentation can then be reviewed by the Executive Steering Committee, Management Council, the DSG and the IRB as part of the post implementation review process described in the IT Investment Management Operating Procedures.



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3.0 Solution Acquisition Project Management Processes

3.1 Solution Acquisition Work Breakdown Structure Process

3.1.1 Purpose

This section describes the Solution Acquisition Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) Process, Work Breakdown Structure definition, benefits, process flow, and process steps used by acquisition projects. The process is used to facilitate the creation of the project WBS that later support the tracking and assessment of the progress SFA acquisition projects.

3.1.2 Process Definition

Guiding Principles

The WBS is created using the following guiding principles:

- Each IPT is responsible for its own WBS;
- WBS baselines must match the approved budgets, resources and milestone schedule;
- The SFA project manager reviews the WBS for approval.

Process

As early as the Vision phase, the SFA project manager and the operating partner project manager can initiate the development of the WBS. They distribute the necessary tools and standards and set a schedule for the acquisition and development plans. The WBS is developed using the Solution Acquisition Plan as a guide.

After the initial WBS has been developed, the operating partner project manager submits it for an independent review and a review by the SFA project manager. The operating partner incorporates the feedback and suggestions from the reviews into the WBS.

The SFA project manager should review the completed WBS to ensure that it follows the project standards, that the baseline and the budget are in agreement, and that the WBS supports the program schedule. After any necessary revisions are made, the project manager baselines the WBS, and begins weekly WBS maintenance.

3.1.3 Benefits

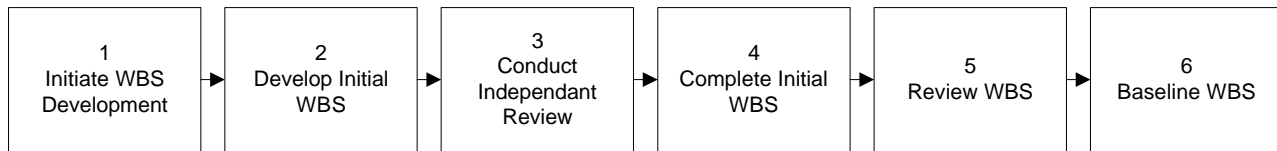
The WBS process benefits SFA by:

- Ensuring that project plans are based upon the approved budgets;
- Standardizing the WBS process so that project progress can be accurately reported;
- Providing an independent review framework to ensure that plans are consistent and accurate.



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3.1.4 Process Flow



3.1.5 Process Steps

1. Initiate WBS Development

The SFA project manager and the operating partner project manager initiate the WBS development process. They agree to the WBS standard and tool. The WBS can be developed as early as the Vision phase to document the schedule of the Vision phase activities. The WBS must be developed once the Task Order is awarded.

2. Develop Initial WBS

The operating partner project manager must review the high level milestones and allocated budget as described in the Solution Acquisition Plan and the Task Order. Then the SFA project manager and the operating partner project manager determine the project management activities to be performed throughout the project. These activities are then scheduled in the WBS in accordance with the SLC and the project schedule. Subsequently, the operating partner project manager develops the complete and detailed project work breakdown structure for project design, development, testing, deployment and support.

3. Conduct Independent Review

The operating partner project manager submits the initial WBS for an independent review. An independent review is a review that is not conducted by either the acquiring organization or the supplying organization. The IPT discusses the suggestions and incorporates changes as necessary.

4. Complete Initial WBS

The operating partner project manager makes any revisions identified during the independent review, and performs a final check of the WBS to ensure that the plan reflects their baseline budgets and supports the project schedule.

5. Review WBS

The SFA project manager conducts a review of the completed WBS to check for consistency and to ensure that the work planning standards are followed, and that the WBS baseline matches the approved budget. The SFA project manager and the IPT conducts reviews with the major stakeholders, such as the Executive Sponsor, to ensure the plan's schedule is acceptable. The Executive Sponsor should approve the WBS.

6. Baseline WBS

Once all changes have been made to the WBS, the operating partner project manager baselines the WBS, incorporates WBS in Solution Acquisition Plan (SAP), and begins maintaining the WBS. The SFA project manager uses the WBS to monitor schedule and cost at a high level. The operating partner project manager uses the detail in the WBS to manage day-to-day progress of the project.



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3.2 Solution Acquisition Status Reporting Process

3.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of Status Reporting is to ensure that the project activities are being performed in accordance with the Solution Acquisition Plan and the project requirements. Status Reporting provides ongoing inputs and guidance to the contractor's effort and identifying risks and issues in the effort. Status reporting begins during the Vision phase and ends at the conclusion of the contract's period of performance. The Solution Acquisition Plan establishes the mechanism to allow the SFA project manager and the IPT to oversee the contractor team's activities and to evaluate the acquisition of products and services. It also provides the vehicle for mutual understanding between the SFA project manager and the contractor of the project's status.

3.2.2 Process Definition

Guiding Principles

- Status reporting procedures are defined early in the project's life cycle;
- Status reports are reviewed periodically by project management and by acquisition organization's management;
- Status reporting responsibility is assigned and reports are delivered promptly;
- Status reports are communicated to SFA project management and all affected groups.

Process

The IPT must develop and deliver project status reports to the SFA project management and SFA senior management. The status reporting process is determined early in the project's life cycle. The measurements in the status report should follow the measurements defined during acquisition planning. The reports outline the status of performance, cost, and schedule for the project at the time of the report. Status should be measured against the planned performance, cost, and schedule documented in the Solution Acquisition Plan.

Guidance on the reporting process can be found in the SFA Analysis Office, the IT Investment Management process, and the Modernization Partner's Program Management Office status reporting process.

3.2.3 Benefits

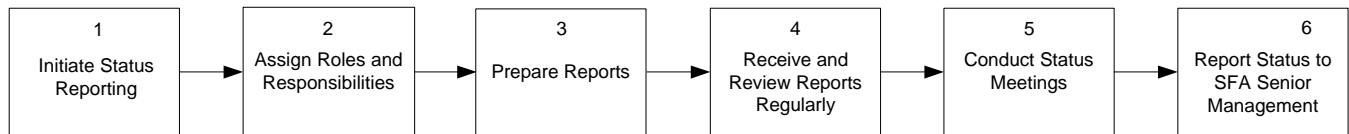
The benefits of Status Reporting include:

- Providing insight into the overall performance of the project;
- Facilitating the functions of the issues management, risk management, work planning and other program processes;
- Enabling SFA to efficiently track, monitor and report on the progress of the acquisition project;
- Enabling efficient tracking, monitoring, and reporting of actual performance against planned activities.
- Enabling effective corrective action for issues or risks to the project.



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3.2.4 Process Flow



3.2.5 Process Steps

1. Initiate Status Reporting

The SFA project manager initiates the status reporting process. The SFA project manager and the IPT members determine the status reporting process needed for the project. The SFA project manager and the IPT then decide which measurements of progress will be tracked within the report. These measures should coincide with the measures identified in the Solution Acquisition Plan. Decisions made during this step should be documented in the Solution Acquisition Plan in the Project Management section.

2. Assign Roles and Responsibilities

The IPT then assigns roles and responsibilities to the IPT members who will be completing the reports, to the program management office which will be monitoring and reviewing the reports, and to the SFA project managers who will also be reviewing the reports. These responsibilities should be documented in the Solution Acquisition Plan in the Project Management section.

3. Prepare Reports

Project teams prepare status reports according to their process. For further guidance on preparing status reports refer to Modernization Partner Program Management Office (PMO) and its reporting process. *See Appendix D for sample PMO Status Report.*

4. Receive and Review Reports

SFA project manager will receive the reports at the designated time and review them prior to the status meeting. The SFA project manager should review the status compared to the planned progress documented in the Solution Acquisition Plan.

5. Conduct Status Meetings

The SFA acquiring organization team members will conduct a regular status meeting to review the project's progress documented in the status report. The meeting should have an agenda with the time and location of the status meeting communicated to all participants prior to the meeting. Meeting minutes should be assigned to a team member and documented during the meeting. All participants should have access to the meeting minutes. All decisions regarding the time, location, participants, responsibilities should be documented in the Solution Acquisition Plan in the section.

During status meetings, the SFA project manager is responsible for identifying, documenting, tracking and correcting problems discovered during the project's life cycle. *See Appendix B for an example Corrective Actions Items log.*

5. Report Status to SFA Senior Management

Status must be reported to SFA Senior Management on a regular basis. Senior management may include the Executive Steering Committee, Management Council, the DSG (Decision Support Group) and the IRB (Investment Review Board); specifically when budget issues arise.



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3.3 Solution Acquisition Risk Management Process

3.3.1 Purpose

This section describes the Solution Acquisition Risk Management Process used by SFA for acquisition projects. The process is used by SFA project managers to identify and mitigate the risks associated with events outside of the project's control that may prevent the successful completion of a project. *In general, risks are potential issues that may impact the successful completion of a project, not under the control of SFA.* Risks are different from issues in that they are not a certainty and have not actually occurred yet. When a negative event is a certainty, it is considered an issue or problem.

This section includes a description of the Risk Management definition, benefits, process flow and process steps.

3.3.2 Process Definition

Guiding Principles

SFA's risk management process is governed by the following guiding principles:

- Risks are identified as early as possible;
- Project leaders identify and take action to mitigate risk;
- Project leaders ensure risks are understood and track the status of mitigation plans;
- Program leadership reviews and actively participates in the mitigation of risks.

Process

Acquisition risk management is a two-part process. First, the business case and Solution Acquisition Plan identifies the risks associated with the acquisition of the solution and the approach is planned based on those risks. Second, a process is employed to manage the risks throughout the acquisition.

The process is described herein.

Project risks are identified during all phases of the Solution Life Cycle (SLC). The IPT completes a risk assessment for each risk to ensure that its impact is fully understood. The assessment includes the risk's potential impact and timing, and a proposed mitigation strategy. The IPT reviews the risks and the mitigation strategy on a regular basis, usually at status meetings. They approve the mitigation strategy, review the status of each risk and assign action items to ensure that the risks are being actively managed.

Risks are recorded and their status maintained in a project risk matrix or automated risk log. The project manager, based upon the input of the IPT, updates the status of each regularly. Once the risk log has been updated with the current status, the project manager includes important risks on the project's status report.

3.3.3 Benefits

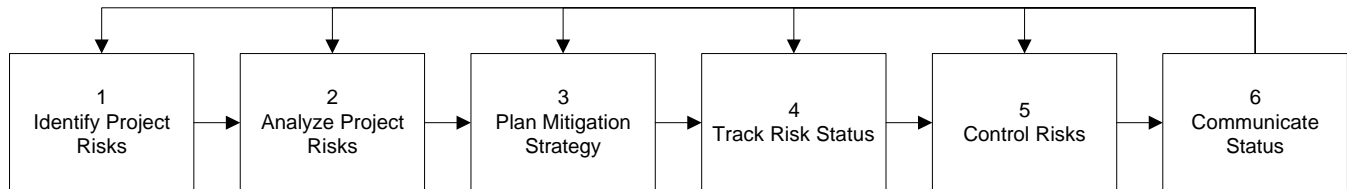
The Risk Management process benefits SFA by:

- Identifying areas outside of the control of the project that could impact the success of the project;
- Ensuring that risks are being actively mitigated to lessen or remove their potential impact;
- Providing a framework for the regular review of project risks.
- Improving project quality.
- Promoting teamwork.



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3.3.4 Process Flow



3.3.5 Process Steps

1. Identify Project Risks

Initially, risks are identified during the Vision Phase when the business case and Solution Acquisition Plan are developed. Subsequently, project risks identified throughout each phase of the SLC. In general, risks are potential issues or events that may impact the successful completion of a project. The SFA project manager and the IPT are to identify project risks early in the project and should encourage the entire team to participate in risk identification. *See Appendix B for an example risk matrix and Appendix C for the risk matrix procedure.*

2. Analyze Risks

The SFA project manager evaluates impacts, probabilities, and timeframes for risks. Then the risks are classified and prioritized. The purpose of risk analysis is to determine the extent of the risks, how they relate to each other, and to identify and mitigate those risks that potentially would have the greater impact.

3. Plan a Mitigation Strategy

The SFA project manager and the IPT plan for the mitigation of risk. In order to plan the mitigation strategy, the responsibility must be assigned, the approach must be determined, and the scope and actions are defined. As part of the mitigation strategy, the critical dates when decisions must be made about implementing the mitigation strategy must be identified. The successful mitigation of risk hinges on the solutions employed to address the project risk areas. The goal of risk mitigation is to minimize the effects of risks that pose a threat to accomplishing project goals.

4. Track Risks

Tracking is a process in which risk information is acquired, compiled, and reported. Risk information is tracked in Status Reports and discussed during reviews. The metrics gathered during tracking are defined during planning and are presented to project managers. The information is then used by the SFA project manager and IPT to make decisions about risks and mitigations plans.

5. Control Risks

Control is the process of analyzing the information contained in a risk tracking tool, such as the risk log, making decisions, and implementing those decisions. The person who has accountability for an identified risk normally makes the decision for mitigating or resolving that risk.



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The SFA project manager and the IPT must review the status of the risks and their mitigation plans. They approve the mitigation plans, assign action items and identify new ones on a regular basis during status meetings.

The SFA project manager, or assigned team member, maintains the risk log containing a list of the identified risks and their current status. The assigned member then enters new risks and updates the status of existing risks and their associated action items based upon input from the IPT and leadership. The contents of the risk log are reported each week in the project status report.

The SFA project manager solicits the status of risks and their action items from the IPT. Their feedback is then used to update the risk log. Once a risk has been mitigated successfully, or the jeopardy date has passed without incident, the risk can be closed.

6. Communicate

Effective, on-going dialogue between the SFA project manager and the IPT must be established for successful risk management. Managers need to establish a culture where risks are identified and addressed as a part of everyday business and where risk information is viewed positively and rewarded. Managers should track risk information in Status Reports and discussed during reviews to establish the risk-identification culture.



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3.4 Solution Acquisition Issue Management Process

3.4.1 Purpose

This section describes the Solution Acquisition Issues Management Process used by SFA acquisition projects. The issue management process includes issue identification, analysis, escalation, resolution, and reporting. An issue is defined as an outstanding item that impacts or inhibits the progress of a project, such as an obstacle that prevents a deliverable from being completed. Issues are different than risks in that they are a certainty and must be resolved quickly. Risks are potential issues that may or may not actually occur.

This section includes a description of the Issues Management definition, benefits, process flow and process steps.

3.4.2 Process Definition

Guiding Principles

- Issues are resolved in a timely fashion by assigning them to the appropriate resources;
- Issues are resolved in a timely fashion by properly prioritizing them and assigning due dates;
- Individuals assigned as issue owners promptly act upon them;
- Issue resolutions are clearly communicated to the impacted parties.

Process

The SFA project manager and the IPT must identify and review new and pending issues during project status meetings. The team confirms the priority and assignment of new issues, and reviews the status of issues that are overdue or require a resolution in the next reporting period.

If an issue has reached an impasse, or if any issue's resolution requires approval due to cost, schedule or scope changes, it is escalated to the program level. The project manager facilitates the resolution of those issues with the management team. The SFA project manager and senior management work to resolve the issue.

Any issue that requires a cost variance, scope change, or schedule change requires the approval of program leadership. Those issues should follow the project's configuration management process.

3.4.3 Benefits

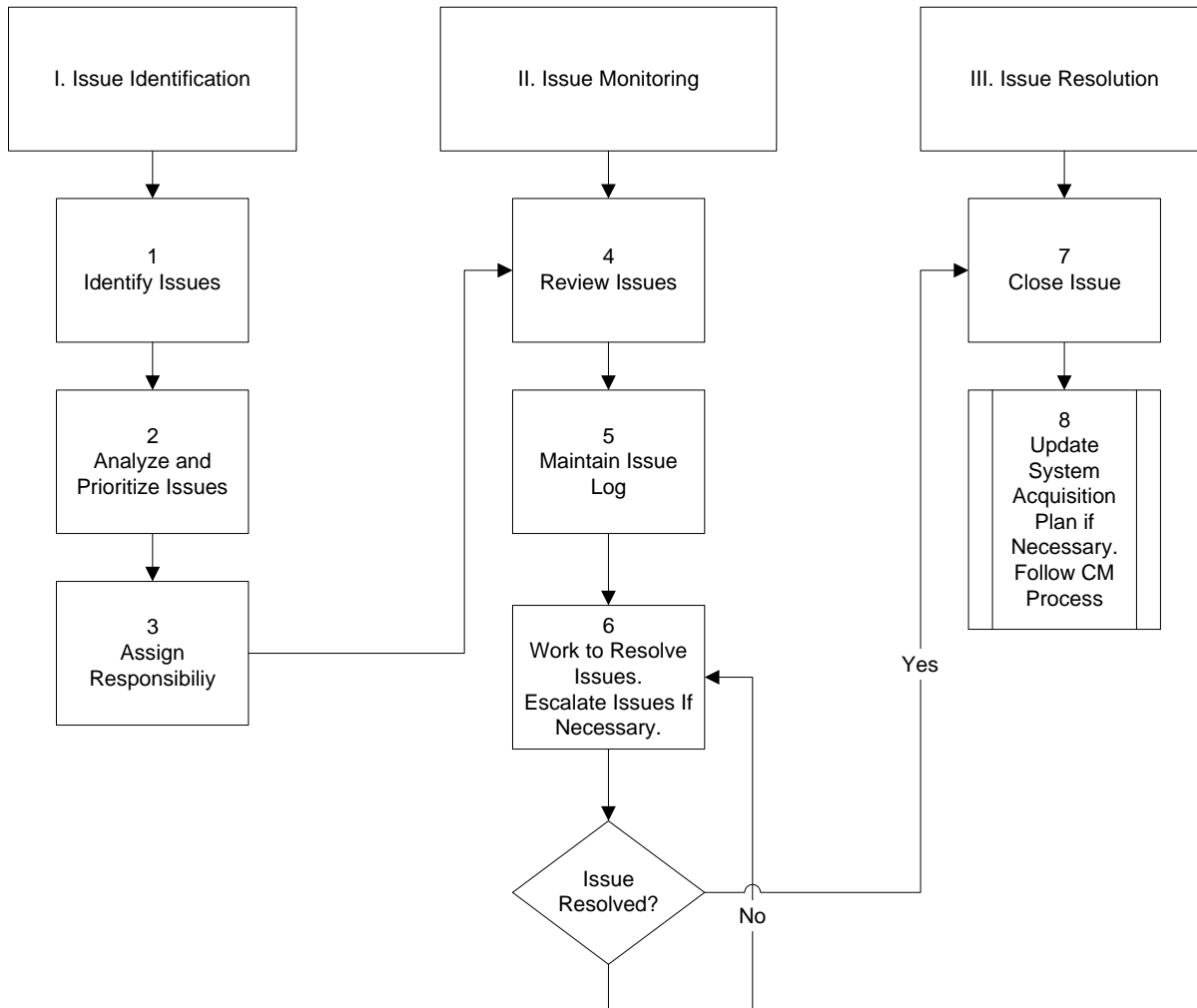
The Issues Management process benefits SFA by:

- Encouraging the early identification of issues impacting the progress of the program,
- Providing a framework for reviewing and documenting issues,
- Managing the resolution of issues by the correct resources in a timely fashion.
- Ensuring timely communication of issues to affected parties.



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3.4.4 Process Flow





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3.4.5 Process Steps

I. Issue Identification

1. Identify Issue

An input to the issue management process is the issue, itself. The issue can be identified by anyone within the organization; however, only a team member can serve as the issue originator and document the issue in and issue log. All issues are to be documented in an issue log. The log can be a matrix or an automated database. Once the issue is logged, it is monitored until closure. In addition, all non-resolved “high” priority issues are to be documented in the project status report. *See Appendix B for an example issue matrix and Appendix C for the issue matrix procedure.*

2. Analyze and Prioritize

The SFA project manager and the IPT evaluate impacts, probabilities, and timeframes for issues. Then the issues are classified and prioritized. The purpose of issue analysis is to determine the extent of the issues, how they relate to each other, and which issues are the most important.

Project status meetings serve as forums to verify that appropriate priority has been assigned to each issue.

3. Assign Responsibility

The SFA project manager is responsible for assigning an owner to the issue, while analyzing its impact on the team or project. Once assigned the SFA project manager is responsible for monitoring progress for the issue resolution. Communication should be on going between the project manager and the owner of the issue. The issue owner is responsible for the issue until it is resolved or closed (i.e., issue no longer impacts the project).

The SFA project manager is assigned ownership for all issues that have cross-functional impacts (e.g. across multiple teams) on a project.

II. Issue Monitoring / Escalation

4. Review Issues

The purpose of reviewing issues is to:

- a. Assist in identifying and selecting possible corrective actions;
- b. Evaluate possible corrective actions to determine appropriate solutions;
- c. Determine whether or not to escalate certain issues.

Issue tracking reports which can be circulated at appropriate meetings, can capture the following types of information:

- d. Open issues with “high” priority;
- e. New issues identified since the last status meeting;
- f. Issues that are due to be closed within a few weeks from the meeting;
- g. Unassigned issues;
- h. “High” priority issues that are past their due dates;
- i. Issues impacting more than one IPT.
- j. Issue status is tracked in Status Reports and discussed during reviews.



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6. Maintain Issue Log

After each meeting, issue owners are responsible for updating the issue log with any new or additional information. At minimum the issue log should be updated weekly. If an issue is resolved, the issue log is updated accordingly.

7. Work to Resolve Issues and Escalate Issues if Necessary

Issue owner's responsibility is to ensure timely resolution of an issue. Irresolvable issues are to be reassigned by the project manager to an alternative team or person. If the issue is open or defies resolution and has a detrimental impact on project milestones or budget, then it must be escalated. Upon escalation, the issue log is updated to reflect the issue status.

Guiding principles for resolving issues include:

- Addressing issues with peers and utilize team's expertise before escalating them;
- Involving those affected by an issue to encourage problem definition and solution identification;
- Escalating issue when corrective action cannot be found or agreed upon;
- Clarifying the impact of the issue;
- Clarifying the issue's priority.
- Tracking issue status in Status Reports and discussed during reviews.

III. Issue Resolution

8. Close Issue

Once an issue is resolved, its status in the issue log should read "closed." Resolved issues are not to be removed from the issue log. Closed issues should be communicated to the IPT and to management. The status report should be used to communicate updated status for issues. In general, issues should be resolved within two reporting periods or as soon as possible.

9. Update Solution Acquisition Plan

As issues are resolved, they may result in changes in scope and therefore the Solution Acquisition Plan. The SFA project manager is responsible for maintaining the Solution Acquisition Plan. If the resolution of an issue requires a change to the scope and/or the Solution Acquisition Plan, the configuration management process defined by the project should be invoked.

Updates to the Solution Acquisition Plan due to resolved issues might include the following:

- Revise project milestones;
- Re-assign resources;
- Change resource work assignment;
- Revisit project scope;
- Reassess budget.



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4.0 Appendix



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